

# THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

VOLUME XIII

NOVEMBER 1936

No. 7

## "We Thank Thee, Lord"

### Unit Portraying Harvest Festivities Through the Ages

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**T**HANKSGIVING DAY, as we ordinarily view it, is an American holiday, inaugurated by the Pilgrim fathers and irregularly observed until the time of Lincoln whose declaration that the last Thursday in November be nationally an annual day of thanksgiving has been observed by each president since 1864. However, from time immemorial, the nations of the earth have celebrated the harvest season by festivities and ritual designed to express gratitude to the beneficent higher powers that have fostered the growth and maturing of the grains and fruits. The present unit has been constructed with the purpose of deepening the children's appreciation of the true significance of the Thanksgiving "holy-day" and of nurturing a feeling of fellowship for peoples of other times and distant places.

Any teachers moved to develop this unit—or a similar one—in their classrooms should realize that (1) any portion of the unit may be worked out by itself if the whole is too great an undertaking; (2) the treatment is not exhaustive—hence substitutions and additions of other

ideas and activities are most appropriate; (3) an entire elementary school may co-operate, thus leaving to different age-groups the development of phases that are peculiarly appropriate to them. In other words, the unit is merely suggestive; it is flexible and open to any modification that may be desired.

#### THE UNIT

##### *Theme*

The festivities betokening gratitude to the higher powers for the abundance of harvest; thanksgiving in various nations and various times.

##### *Objectives* (from standpoint of the child)

1. Feel appreciation of the meaning and significance of the Thanksgiving season.
2. Gain understanding of, and sympathy for, customs in other lands and times.
3. Participate in expressional activities that will yield enjoyment, develop specialized individual abilities, and foster initiative and leadership.
4. Co-operate in a project as an interested member of a group.
5. Know and enjoy the better literature, music, and art that represent the spirit of true thanksgiving.
6. Converse, discuss in speech or writing, and "play-act" as in real life (talking and writing as an accompaniment and outgrowth of active experience, whether physical or mental).

*Centralizing activities and experiences* (Choice of one)

1. Developing and presenting a pageant whose scenes portray the festivities of the harvest throughout historic times (scenes selected in the light of the time and reference materials available).

2. Developing a frieze with scenes representative of the festivities of harvest—near and far, ancient and modern.

3. Holding a local Thanksgiving festival where-in children of old American and recent Old-World lineage co-operate in portraying scenes typical of their forbears and representative of the more reverent current practice.

4. Giving a varied assembly program that features the historical development of thanksgiving festivities; the literature, the music, and the art of the season.

*Suggested methods of approach*

1. Local county or state fairs; "harvest home picnics"; "sauerkraut days"; and the like.

2. Study of foods—excursion to the market; schoolroom exhibit.

3. Bulletin board: clipping of the President's or a governor's annual proclamation.

4. "Maximum assignment" for brightest pupils when the class is studying the religious life of the Greeks, the Romans, or the Indians.

5. Customary learning of seasonal songs and poems.

*Outline of development* (informational aspects)

I. Harvest festivities of biblical times

- A. The Canaanites' harvest of grapes, Judges 9: 21
- B. The Feast of the Tabernacles, Deuteronomy 16: 13-18
- C. Celebration in the home, Nehemiah 8: 15
- D. Gleaning in the fields of Boaz, Ruth 2: 2-8; 17

II. Greek festival honoring Demeter, goddess of agriculture and harvest

- A. One week each November honored by the married women; sacred meal
- B. Procession to the temple of Demeter on the promontory of Colias; stay of three days
- C. Feasting for three days in Athens; sacrifice of cow and sow to Demeter; offerings of fruit and honeycomb

III. Roman festival honoring Ceres, goddess of growing things, on October 4

- A. Opening with fasting by common people; offering of sow and first cuttings of the grain

B. Procession through the fields; rustic sports afterwards

C. Conclusion with a feast of thanksgiving for Ceres' bounty

IV. "Harvest-Home" in England

A. Merrymaking in olden days

1. Last wagonload of grain surmounted by sheaf of "corn" dressed in gala garments to represent Ceres

2. Procession gaily led by players of pipe and tabor

3. Laborers, hand in hand, encircling the wagon as it slowly draws near village where the old and crippled await the festivities

4. Songs of the approaching reapers:

Harvest-home, harvest home,  
We have ploughed, we have sowed,  
We have reaped, we have mowed,  
We have brought home every load,  
Hip, hip, hip, harvest-home!

(Or if ringing hand-bells, rather than pipe and tabor, precede)

The boughs do shake, and the bells  
do ring,

So merrily comes our harvest in,  
Our harvest in, our harvest in,  
So merrily comes our harvest in!

Hurrah!

5. Feast given by farmer for all his laborers and their families

a. Beef, bacon, ham, cheese, butter

b. Apple pies, brown loaves of bread

B. "Harvest-home" in more modern times (decades ago)

1. Gleaners (mothers and children of poor families) following the reapers and snipping off the heads of grain with old scissors; grain beaten out with flails

2. Whole village given a feast that is furnished by the group of farmers

3. Day begun with a church service of thanksgiving; feast; rural sports

V. Thanksgiving in the New World

A. The Pilgrims in 1621 (See juvenile histories.)

B. Celebration during the Revolutionary War

C. Washington's proclamation in 1789 (See Schaffler's *Thanksgiving*.)

D. Lincoln's proclamation in 1864—annual since that time

E. Current practices in observing the holiday in the United States

F. Canadian observance in connection with Armistice Day

*Suggested activities and experiences in developing the unit*

1. Locally determined method of approach (see "Suggested Methods of Approach").
2. Development of an informational background; talking of it.
  - a. Conversing about the harvest in America today; describing scenes typical in the gathering of the various kinds of fruit and grain
  - b. Relating experiences in food markets, at county and state fairs, and at harvest home picnics
  - c. Showing how dependent the farmer is on the gifts of nature: soil, rain, sunshine, proper temperature
  - d. Deciding why we connect Thanksgiving with fruits and grains that have been gathered and harvested
  - e. Telling the story of the first Thanksgiving feast of the Pilgrim fathers: their reasons, their preparation, their guests, the events
  - f. Tracing back to see where the Pilgrims may have gotten their idea of a Thanksgiving feast
    - (1) Their Bibles
    - (2) Their stay in the Netherlands
    - (3) Old English customs
    - (4) Customs of other ancient peoples
  - g. Comparing modern customs with those of the olden days
    - (1) Indians
    - (2) Roumanians and other South Europeans at the harvest of grapes
    - (3) People of America
3. Preparing to share the story of Thanksgiving with others
  - a. As a beginning utilizing any apt mode of spontaneous expression in the way of sketching, original poem or song, voluntary suggestion of some centralizing activity,

contribution toward a room exhibit, and the like

- b. Stimulating and inaugurating some project that will integrate the impressions gained concerning Thanksgiving
- c. Helping to plan the objectives, procedures, materials from the viewpoint of the pupils
- d. Supervising during the progress to the extent that the committee-groups exercise inter-group and extra-group criticism and suggest improved development
- e. Inviting others to share their experiences; preparing to be hosts in true Thanksgiving spirit and style; cultivating reverence
  - (1) Dressing up the room or the auditorium
  - (2) Bringing fruits and vegetables to give to the needy
- f. Sharing the story of the holiday with others

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1. Books
 

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Norwood, "Thanksgiving and Praise"

"Thanksgiving Hymn"
3. Pictures
 

Millet, "The Gleaners"

Boughton on various Pilgrim themes

# We Visit the Grocery Store

JEAN CALHOUN

*New York City*

THE TEACHER was young, pretty, and earnest, and the school was of the type known as progressive.

. . . . .

Now suppose we write a story—all of us—the whole class together. Yes, Arthur? Well really dear, I don't think it's quite fair to be as silly as that. I know I said I liked to have you ask questions—I know the intelligent student always inquires—but—Listen to me a minute, Arthur. Well it's different in this case because your question simply wasn't intelligent—that's why. You know quite well that I didn't mean the whole class would hold on to one big pencil. Miriam dear, if you'd exert just a little control you'd find that you could stop giggling quite easily. Arthur really isn't at all funny. Dear me, I'm very much afraid we'll have to postpone our story writing until Miriam—You're choking? Well we'll just sit here calmly and quietly till Miriam stops choking. If I remember rightly Miriam, this is the sixth choking spell you've had today. There. Now.

As I said, we're all going to write a story. Won't that be jolly? Of course you children don't do the actual writing. I write it. Well, dear, you do. Let me explain. It's your story—the class's story. You make it up, you see, and all I do is write it down. It will be a collective creation. By that I mean that no one of us is to set himself or herself up as dictator. At the same time however, no one of us will neglect doing his share in the work of creation. Yes, Mary, certainly I mean *her* share if it's a girl.

We must all have open minds, ready to accept the suggestions of others when we

find them superior to our own, but remembering at the same time never to copy—to follow blindly. That's one of the most important things. *The* most important thing, really. It's what I've tried to stress so in all our creative work this year. What, Ellen? Yes, I'm sure Miss Cole stresses it too. It's quite as important in manual training as in English. No, not more important. Of course not. I can hardly believe Miss Cole said that, Ellen.

Now then, shall we commence? First of all we must choose a subject. Tommy, what would you suggest? Well, but you must be able to think of something, dear. There are so many exciting things in the world. Take plenty of time, now. We're not in any hurry. I'm quite sure you'll be able to think of something splendid in just a minute. Everybody quiet now, while Tommy thinks. . . . Miriam! Remember what I said about self-control a minute ago. . . . Quiet, everybody. . . .

Ed Wynn? No, dear, I'm afraid we don't quite understand. What I had in mind as a subject for our story was not a person, but things that we do. Interesting things. There are so many things that we've all done together that would make such exciting stories. Do you remember last week when we went—Yes, Arthur? But Arthur, the movies aren't really exciting, dear. No, I've never seen Buck Jones, and don't particularly care to. I disagree with you, Arthur. I think I've missed very little. Arthur! That's quite uncalled for! I'm not in the least interested in a lot of slush and mush as you say, and if you make any more objectionable remarks I'll have to ask you to leave the room. Miriam! There, that's better.

Now, I have a small suggestion to

make. You needn't follow it, but it's just a thought. Last week, you remember, we paid a visit to Mr. Parker's grocery store to learn about weights and measures for our arithmetic class. It was all very exciting and we had a beautiful time. Now it seems to me that this would lend itself very nicely to story treatment. We will relate quite simply our impressions of the store, of Mr. Parker and his wife, and of all the lovely things in the store—the shining apples, and the scales for weighing, and the thrilling purple eggplants—remember how excited we got about the eggplants? Janet, suppose you begin the story. Well—I think "Miss Purkis made us go to the grocery store" is not strictly true, Janet. You know you're never forced to do anything, dear. We wanted terribly to go, all of us. We knew it would be such fun. Suppose we say instead: "We went to the grocery store."

I'll write that down. Now, Philip, can you give us our next sentence? Oh no, Philip. Don't you see, dear, if you say "After a while we went home," there won't be any story? Why yes, there is too a story. There's a story in everything we see and do, Philip. It's only waiting to be found and written, and when we don't find it, it's because we're blind. Now Philip, put on your spectacles—What? You lost them yesterday? No dear, I'm afraid we don't quite understand. You may sit down, Philip, and -er- Ellen, suppose we hear from you now. Will you give us your first impression of our grocery store? Oh but Ellen dear, I don't think we'd better say that. Maybe you did notice it right away, but it's not at all interesting. No, Ellen, we'll leave out "Mr. Parker's wife had blackheads." We shall mention her, however, as I think we all feel that she was part of the store—she imparted a definite atmosphere, with her rosy cheeks and her blue apron. Yes, she very much belongs in our story. Now, what shall we say about her, Ellen?

"The grocer's wife was—"

Come dear, what was she? Oh yes, Ellen, she was there of course, but we already know that. What was she like? How did she act? Well, Arthur, she may have been silly to you, but to the rest of us she was very pleasant and jolly indeed and so was Mr. Parker. Just a minute. Now, here we are:

"We went to the grocery store. The grocer and his wife were pleasant, jolly people. We liked them. Their cheeks were pink like the apples in the store."

Mary, you may go on from there. Tell us something about the vegetables we saw. But dear, you can't just say there were vegetables. Tell us about them.

"There were string beans." That's a good start. And what else? But Mary, surely you remember more than string beans. We were there quite a while, you know. You can't think of another thing? Tommy, let's see if your memory is any better. Campbell's Tomato Soup isn't really a vegetable, though, Tommy. It's made from a vegetable, yes. And that suggests—very good—Hugh—tomatoes. And oh, there were ever so many more—carrots and peas and cauliflower, and corn, and that's fine, Ellen—radishes, and—yes, Janet, celery—long white stalks of it. At last I think we're really getting into the spirit of it. Our story is becoming quite gay and colorful. Listen to this:

"There were string beans in the store, and peas, and carrots that looked like orange cornucopias. And tomatoes, the color of blood. And cauliflower, and yellow corn, and long white stalks of celery. But best of all were the eggplants. They were beautiful purple balloons."

What, Arthur? You wouldn't like to tie a string to an eggplant and wait for it to go up? As usual you've completely missed the point, but we won't hold the class back by going into it now. Everyone else understands, Arthur.

Now, let me see, Miriam. What have



you to tell us about weights and measures? Dear me, another choking spell. Philip. We haven't heard from you lately. But Philip, why do you keep harping on that absurd idea? It's a story to the rest of us. Why isn't it to you? Because it isn't any good? Define "good," if you please, Philip. I thought so. You don't know how. Sit down, Philip. Yes, Hugh? You don't think it's a story, either? And why, if I may ask? But things *did* happen, Hugh, plenty of them. You and Philip are so completely lacking in imagination that I sometimes feel—oh well. Hugh! Stand up again. I have an idea. Suppose you tell me, in your own words, a story about a grocery store. I'll write it down, exactly as you tell it, and then we'll compare our collective story with yours. It might be interesting. Well, Hugh? I'm waiting. You're thinking? Very well, but don't be too long. . . . Ready?

"The grocer took off his mustache"—But Hugh, he didn't have a mustache. Oh, a different grocer. It's not at all what I meant, but you may go on.

"Then he took off his wig, which was black, and we saw that he was not a grocer at all, but the detective. He was in disguise because he wanted to see who was stealing the cans of tomato soup. They weren't really soup, though. They were full of pearls. They were pearls." Yes, Hugh, I have that. "Charlie Chan stole them from India, and a guy stole them from him, and another guy stole them once when they were on a boat in somebody's bag, and Ginger Rogers stuck them in her mouth, but William Powell saw her doing it, except that this other guy—" Hugh! Hugh! Stop talking please! I'm sorry, but I'll have to interrupt you. I'm afraid this won't do at all. Yes, I know I did, but I've changed my mind. We don't wish to hear any more of it, any of us. Children! Children! I just can't think what's got into you!

. . . . .

With an expression of deep satisfaction, the young woman read the blurb:

"These stories, written practically unaided by children whose ages range from seven to nine, are a brilliant demonstration of the advantages of the newer methods of teaching. We see here the child mind, shorn of all adult influence. The refreshingly underivative quality is perhaps most apparent in one of the group creations. 'We Visit the Grocery Store' is a small gem which holds its own beside many of our modern short stories. One thinks immediately of Hemingway and Morley Callaghan. And yet there is a difference. This tale, in its simplicity, its rhythmic use of repetition, its crudely vivid descriptions, and its thoroughly charming naïveté could never be taken for other than what it is—a work of the very young, whose spirits have not yet been sullied by the sordid complexity of the world in which we live."

The young woman found a certain page and read, her expression beatific:

#### WE VISIT THE GROCERY STORE

We went to the grocery store. The grocer and his wife were pleasant, jolly people. We liked them. Their cheeks were pink like the apples in the store. There were string beans in the store, and peas, and carrots that looked like orange cornucopias. And tomatoes the color of blood. And cauliflower, and yellow corn, and long white stalks of celery. But best of all were the eggplants! They were beautiful purple balloons. The grocer was pleasant. We liked him. He showed us how to weigh things. The scales were shiny and we watched them go up and down. It was fun. The grocer's jolly wife wiped off the apples on her blue apron and gave us each one. We thanked her. They were white and sweet when we bit into them. We said good-bye to the grocer and his wife. Then we came home.

# A Study of Children's Reading

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THIS PAPER reports an analysis of the undirected, uncontrolled reading of books done outside school hours by 924 pupils of a city school. It was conducted partly in the interest of the English department of the school, partly because most studies of reading have been conducted under conditions which limited or governed the choices of children. It was thought that a study of uncontrolled reading might have some general interest.

Two methods of receiving reports were employed. The subjects were asked first to list books which they had read and enjoyed during the last year, or approximately during that time, and to state briefly and simply why they had enjoyed them. It was thought that the memory element served a purpose. If a book was remembered or recalled it had made at least more than a purely temporary impression. The other device was a reading diary. Each pupil was asked to keep a record of books he read during a period of three school months, to state where he had obtained each book, whether it was being read for the first time, or re-read, if he considered it worth reading again.

It was duly explained that the responses had no bearing upon grades or class status, and honest reports were urged and solicited. The reports on the diaries were checked partially by conferences with some of the parents and by checking against public library records to see if books reported to have been borrowed from that library had been charged against the cards of the pupils reporting. These investigations indicated that in practically all instances the books had

been secured. A further check, after the diaries had been completed, consisted in speaking informally to a number of the children selected at random, concerning some of the books which they said they had read. These conversations, of course, would indicate whether or not the books had been read. The evidence pointed toward reliability of the reports. Very few instances suggested padded reading lists or dishonest comments, so few that the trends would in no significant wise be altered.

Hundreds of different titles were reported. They were classified under twelve general headings, as follows:

1. Juvenile fiction, such as series books.
2. Fairy tale collections.
3. Standard fiction, and relatively desirable modern fiction of the type usually considered adult. Manifestly, this classification was subjective, and it was frankly lenient. It included, for example, Dickens, Tarkington, Twain, and Conan Doyle. *Ann Vickers* was classified here, as were *The Call of the Wild* and *Moby Dick*. Hierarchies could not be multiplied indefinitely and most fiction which had a reasonable claim was placed in this category.
4. Children's classics, such as *Heidi*.
5. The literary crime wave, murder, mystery, ghosts, blood, thunder.
6. Extremely childish material such as *Skippy*. Most of these were cheap adaptations of alleged comics.
7. Books with which we were un-

familiar, and could not safely classify.

8. Biography, travel, history.

9. Prose fiction designed for adults,

Table I shows how the reading of children at different intelligence levels was distributed among these classifications. In each group, line *Q* shows how many titles

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF TITLES OF BOOKS READ BY BOYS AND GIRLS IN DESIGNATED I.Q. GROUPS

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
I.Q. 115-150 46 Boys Ages 11-13	Q	104	8	66	20	40	7	19	10	9	4	0	0
	D	168	6	89	44	35	5	24	17	10	8	1	0
77 Girls Ages 11-14	Q	114	5	60	63	58	1	35	7	7	0	0	0
	D	338	5	154	161	77	4	103	10	34	2	14	6
I.Q. 90-114 159 Boys Ages 11-14	Q	202	6	174	63	59	28	40	15	13	8	0	0
	D	356	6	180	76	74	39	42	16	18	11	0	0
306 Girls Ages 11-14	Q	316	31	289	142	88	11	154	13	112	7	3	2
	D	287	30	466	227	140	26	327	8	93	5	9	5
I.Q. under 90 70 boys Ages 12-15	Q	67	3	91	33	15	15	15	8	6	3	0	0
	D	82	9	99	56	12	10	12	8	8	1	0	0
156 Girls Ages 13-16	Q	56	6	95	25	34	2	58	4	28	14	0	1
	D	143	8	136	33	28	9	64	3	54	1	3	0
I.Q. unknown 32 Boys Ages 13-16	Q	76	0	46	15	4	1	16	0	0	0	0	0
	D	60	0	28	23	15	1	23	7	6	1	0	0
78 Girls Ages 11-15	Q	75	9	61	30	31	0	38	1	21	0	0	1
	D	150	7	102	65	57	3	80	3	56	0	2	3

and of a cheap, often rather "sexy" nature, especially adaptations from or originals of certain Hollywood contributions to American life and letters.

10. Scientific or semi-scientific books.
11. Poetry, drama.
12. The Bible, other religious books.

were reported by the group on the questionnaires, line *D* how many in the diaries. The columns are numbered to agree with the twelve classifications listed above.

Table I indicates that all of these children read a great deal of juvenile fiction, but they also read a great deal under



classifications three and four. Among the boys there is little difference to be noted among the different groups. The girls read relatively more than the boys, and it is interesting to note, especially in the groups of girls with I.Q.'s less than 115, the heavy frequencies in columns 7 and 9, in which less well-known or relatively trashy books were tabulated. Biography, history, travel, and science books were read more frequently by boys, not in vast numbers by boys or girls. Poetry and drama appealed little, but mystery,

but the actual statements of the children were in their own words. These data were assembled from the questionnaires.

Table II indicates that mystery and adventure were cited more frequently than were any other specific reasons for liking books. As a rule the responses were general, rather than specific. The infrequency with which romantic or love elements, pathos, and sympathy are mentioned, and the absence of humor may be significant. It is not likely that these elements do not appeal to children, but it is likely that the

TABLE II  
CHILDREN'S REASONS FOR LIKING BOOKS EXPRESSED IN PERCENTAGES OF TOTAL  
NUMBER OF BOOKS READ

Reasons	I.Q. Unknown		I.Q. Less than 90		I.Q. 91-114		I.Q. 115 and over	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Mystery	9	10	6	8	10	7	15	12
Adventure	18	37	16	35	18	38	15	42
Romance	2	1	6	2	4	1	3	1
Suited to Age	10	5	10	7	11	7	13	4
General Statement	47	41	56	42	49	43	43	37
Information	7	3	4	5	5	2	3	2
Pathos-Sympathy	0	3		1	1	1	8	1
Recommended as a Classic	7	0	2		2	1		1

The first line reads, 9% of the books remembered and enjoyed by the girls whose I.Q.'s were not known and 10% of those listed by boys in the same group were enjoyed, it was stated, because of a mystery element, etc.

crime, and murder stories appeared frequently, especially in the girls' lists. Fairy stories were not read frequently. The heaviest frequencies, almost without exception, are under juvenile fiction. The frequencies in columns three and four, which might be considered together inasmuch as each is a classification including desirable prose fiction, are significant and encouraging.

In Table II are shown the reasons children in the indicated I.Q. groups advanced as the principal reasons for recommending books they enjoyed. Children were asked to state in a very brief space their principal reason for liking each book. The responses, it was found, could be classified in the categories of the table,

children did not think analytically enough to recognize the fact unaided. Of further significance is it that on the average about 10 per cent only of the books were not considered worth re-reading. Besides being non-analytic the children were not severe critics.

Table III was derived from the diaries. It shows what percentage of girls and boys in the designated I.Q. groups read no books, what percentage read six or more. The figure six is used because not a great many children reported more than six books, and so a fairly accurate picture is presented by this table. Some children reported more than twenty books. As would be expected, brighter children read more extensively.

So many different titles were listed that tabular presentation is impractical, but an analysis of those titles elicits a number of pertinent comments. It seemed obvious that many were selected simply because they happened to be available. This indicates the desirability of selecting for school libraries books designed for leisure reading as well as books designed to impart information. The influence of the moving picture seemed very strong. Numbers<sup>1</sup> of books were listed which had re-

*Tracy*, and *Tarzan* books. Boys in 7-A listed *Robin Hood* and *Pinocchio* frequently. Altogether, *Tom Sawyer* and *Little Women* were the most popular.

Some selections were surprising, and some disconcerting. It was surprising to find *An American Tragedy*, *Ann Vickers*, *The White Sister*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Jennie Gerhardt*, *The Plastic Age*, and unspecified stories by Guy de Maupassant. The disconcerting titles ran in general in the direction of lurid, throbbing accounts

TABLE III  
PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN REPORTING NO BOOKS OR MORE THAN FIVE BOOKS IN DIARIES  
Percentages of Pupils in Designated I.Q. Group

Books Read	I.Q. Unknown		I.Q. Less than 90		I.Q. 91-114		I.Q. Over 114	
	B.	G.	B.	G.	B.	G.	B.	G.
Six or More	0		34%	21%	66%	60%	69%	96%
No Books	0		20%	10%	5%	3%	0	0

cently been produced in moving picture form. This was true not only of classics, but of less desirable books. It indicates the desirability of using the moving picture as a means of stimulating reading, and should tend to allay the fears of those who believe that the moving picture will eventually tend to supplant reading. The catholicity of the selections indicates that these children were quite susceptible to suggestion, and it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the great number of desirable books read is a direct reflection of good work on the part of the teachers.

Among the books listed most frequently by girls were *Little Women*, *Little Men*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Seventeen*. Girls in grade 7-A also listed *Alice in Wonderland* and *Heidi*. Boys reported *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Penrod and Sam*, *Tom Swift*, *Dick*

of illicit love or pulsating passion.<sup>2</sup> It included such excursions into the exotic as *Tarnished Love*, *Love is a Racket*, *Pasionate Puritan*, and such cynical aspects of holy matrimony as *Second-Hand Wife*, *Wife for Sale*, *His Mother-in-Law*, *Unofficial Husband*, *Alimony*, *Old Wives for New*, *Ex-Mistress*, *Ex-Wife*, such outbursts of glowing desire or seizure of sentiment as *Lipstick Girl*, *One Day*, *Personal Darling*, *The Barbarian Lover*. Most of these titles recurred time and again.

The study indicates that these children read avidly, but that their tastes could be directed, and the substantial could be made as appealing as the cheap and trashy, and particularly does it indicate the tremendous importance of availability and the movies in determining choice.

<sup>1</sup> *Frankenstein*, *Bad Girl*, *Dracula*, *Anna Karenina*, *Alice Adams*, *Jane Eyre*, *Tale of Two Cities*, are examples.

<sup>2</sup> The writer wishes to confess that his judgment of the books listed in this category was formulated either from second-hand information or through hasty and half-averted glances. He hopes no injustice has been done.

# At Work With Books

FLORENCE TREDICK

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THERE IS one book in my library which draws as a magnet all day long steady groups of admirers, wonderers, users. It is Webster's *New International Dictionary*. Sometimes it is its size that attracts. "See how big it is!" "Did you know there could be so many words?" Or perhaps it is the thumb index, or the splendors of the colored plates. The charts, pictures, and diagrams, too, are fascinating. And in maturer years the joy of a book in which you can find something about almost everything gives it a place supreme in the reference corner of any elementary school library.

No child of course leaps at a bound into the intelligent use and appreciation of an unabridged dictionary. On the shelves near its throne are many reference books of varying difficulty, and if we listen to what goes on in the groups that gather around the library teacher hour after hour we shall note that children are here learning step by step both how to work with books and what books will be most useful to them. We shall see that even first grade children enjoy knowing the meaning of such terms as title, author, publisher; that no child is too small to know what fun it is to look up things. We shall see that all sizes of patrons hold their books correctly, turn the pages properly, notice page numbers. Children enjoy using dictionaries from the third grade up. They are trained (in Webster's *Dictionary for Boys and Girls*) to find first the letter, then the page, then the word on the page, by means of many drills and games.

From the fourth grade on lessons and games teach skills in using table of con-

tents, preface, index, glossary, maps, bibliographies, graphs—as well as the use of *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia*, the *Junior Britannica*, and *World Book*, and single books indispensable to the day by day reference requirements of an elementary school.

I have mentioned the best children's encyclopedias on the market. None is really perfect for use in the elementary school. The articles are too difficult or wordy; little consideration of the topics in the elementary school curriculum influences the choice of subjects discussed; the titles of the articles are often unintelligible to children; or (most disappointing of all) what the children look for is not there. It seems to me that this inadequacy is quite as much the fault of librarians and teachers as of publishers. A compilation of children's disappointments might go far in showing what we should expect of encyclopedias.

In the meantime, while we await the ideal reference work, there are many simple books which, because of their good indexes and arrangement quite as much as subject matter, are outstandingly useful to children in their work. Such are the many geographical and history readers, and such books as the *Petersham Story Book of Things We Use*, and *Story Book of the Earth's Treasures*; Hillyer's *Child's History of the World*, *Child's Geography of the World*, and *Child's History of Art*; Ilin, *Black on White*, *What Time Is It?*; Lacey, *Light Then and Now*; Towsley, *Around the Clock*; Stephenson, *Caves, Tents and Houses*; Washburne, *Story of the Earth and Sky*, and many others.

These are used both in the library and throughout the school, for besides coming to the library to work with books, children and teachers borrow reference books, pamphlets, and pictures for use in the classrooms. Suppose we leave the library for a minute to see what the rest of the school is doing with books.

The first grade is busy with the jungle, with papier-mâché elephants, giraffes, and tigers all about. They are studying the pictures in *Boga, the Elephant*, by Baroness Dombrowski; in the first and second *Picture Book of Animals*; and in a very unliterary work called *Wild Animal Actors*, by Christenson.

Grade two finds the *Early Cave-Men*, by Dopp, and *Stories of Shepherd Life*, by Burns their best sources of information as to the ways of primitive man.

The Indians of grade three consult both text and pictures of the *Indian How Book* by Parker; *Indian Crafts and Lore* by Salomon, and *Little Fox* by Keelor to be sure the costuming and properties of their Indian play are just right.

The fourth grade children are following the flight of a stork from Holland to Egypt as the teacher reads aloud from *Fly-away-Flipetty* by Wilson, thus gaining an interest in the countries which will be their term's work in geography. They are particularly interested in Egypt and are already beginning to use the books the teacher has gathered on their library corner table:

- Wilbur—*Egypt* (Burton Holmes series)
- Hillyer—*A Child's Geography of the World*  
—*A Child's History of Art*
- Wells—*How the Present Came from the Past*
- Coffman—*Child's Story of the Human Race*
- Erleigh—*In the Beginning*
- Wheeler—*Playing with Clay*
- National Geographic Magazines*

For the fifth grade study of colonial life and the United States, there are many splendid books which children enjoy using, some of which are:

- Clark—*Westward to the Pacific*
- Driggs—*The Pony Express Goes Through*
- Prescott—*A Day in a Colonial Home*
- Rowson—*Candle Days*
- Brown—*When the World Was Young*
- Hander—*Picture Book of the States*
- Quinn—*Picture Map Geography of the United States*
- McGuire—*Adventuring in Young America*
- Bailey—*Children of the Handicrafts*
- Barber—*Nursery History of the United States*

By following the clear directions in *Wonder Windows* by Eckford, some of the boys are weaving small rugs in a Navaho pattern. Becholdt's *Handy Book for Boys* helped with the colorful totem poles which brighten the library and exhibit corner.

The sixth grade, which is studying Japan, finds the four books which have helped them most to be:

- Sweeney—*Western Youth Meets Eastern Culture*
- Franck—*Japanese Empire*
- Burton Holmes—*Japan*
- "Little Pictures of Japan" from *My Travel Ship*

For their history work the books written by Jennie Hall are a never-ending delight. They use also Sabin, *Classic Myths that Live Today*; Barry, *Wonder Flights of Long Ago*, and Hoben, *Knights Old and New*.

Thus from the first school year are children being given training, systematic and continuous, in the effective handling and use of library books and materials. The practice of using many books grows into the habit of using many books, of acquiring the broad information and ability to think necessary not only for a better education, but for better daily living.



# Contemporary Poetry for Children

WALTER BARNES

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(Continued from April)

EDITOR'S NOTE: In the January, February, and April, 1936, issues of *THE REVIEW*, Dr. Barnes discussed present-day writers of poetry for children. He took the position that "Good poetry for children is good poetry that is good for children." From this viewpoint, he examined the work of Elizabeth Madox Roberts, Winifred Welles, Rachel Field, Frances Frost, Mary Austin, Rose Fyleman, Eleanor Farjeon, and Monica Shannon. In this, and the December number, Dr. Barnes will consider the work of several other contemporary writers of poetry for children.

## SPECIAL COLLECTIONS FOR CHILDREN

One of the gratifying trends of the times, one which shows how important is the children's book-trade, is the segregating of poems deemed suitable for children and young people from the collected poetry of writers for adults, and the printing of these poems in special editions. Five such volumes have come to my attention, representing Edna St. Vincent Millay, Carl Sandburg, Sara Teasdale, Vachel Lindsay, and Emily Dickinson.

Miss Millay's book<sup>1</sup> contains seven brief poems clearly designed for children and here printed for the first time. They are pleasant verses, showing an insight into child psychology and some fancy and wistfulness, but not otherwise notable and certainly not characteristic of Miss Millay. The remainder of the hundred-page volume contains her best-known and oft-quoted poems, of the simpler, less sophisticated, and dryly ironic type—though the collector has sagaciously not confined

himself to the joy-of-life poems and the merely "wholesome." It is, on the whole, a representative gathering of Miss Millay's best things.

The collection of Carl Sandburg's poems<sup>2</sup> seems to me neither altogether typical of the poet nor especially appealing to children. Mr. Sandburg's sensitiveness to children is obvious and his candor and bald sincerity would normally be expected to touch children's feelings. Certainly his Rootabaga stories, at least the first volume of the series, are vastly entertaining and yet closely in keeping with Mr. Sandburg's nature. But most of his poems, even the ones concerning childhood, are in temper, purpose, and style, alien to most children. And yet—and yet—it may well be that to the occasional child, and he not puny in spiritual stature, there may come from these tender-robust poems of Sandburg a more vibrant energizing and a more sweeping katharsis than from the suave, traditionally patterned verses of our anthologies. Let Mr. Sandburg have his way with children—perhaps he *has* a way with them.

Sara Teasdale's volume<sup>3</sup> is described as "verses new and old for boys and girls." It contains poems in Miss Teasdale's most cameo-like, lyrical manner; but, naturally, her most poignant poems on life and love are not represented. Here we have nature and the poet's response in song, especially stars and the moon and other night-pieces. In substance and in mood they are well within the circle of interests of the poetry-

<sup>1</sup> *Poems Selected for Young People*. Harpers, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> *Early Moon*. Harcourt Brace, 1930.

<sup>3</sup> *Stars Tonight*. Macmillan, 1930.



loving child; and in delicate charm of expression they rank with the best of Miss Teasdale's work.

Vachel Lindsay's collection for children<sup>4</sup> differs from the others in this group in that many of the poems, perhaps more than half of them, were from the beginning designed for children, signed, sealed and delivered to them. His "poem games" such as the "The Potatoes' Dance" and the varied and delightful "Moon Poems" were bequeathed directly to children, not merely appropriated by them. They are among the most representative verses of Lindsay the "cymbalist," abounding in repetition, alliteration, the "lively din" of jingling, staccato sounds; whimsical, nonsensical, fancifully foolish. The second part of this volume is made up of more mature poems—such as "The Congo," "The Sante Fe Trail," and "The Chinese Nightingale." This is the best of Vachel Lindsay for children, and perhaps for older people.

About one-tenth of the poems of Emily Dickinson (a tithe for the young) have been gathered into *Poems for Youth*.<sup>5</sup> Those who are destined to be Dickinsonians when they are older will be captivated—no, captured—by these poems while they are younger. For these are genuine Dickinson pieces, and their impact upon those who are "of the faith" will be electric. But Emily Dickinson's naïveté, that appearance of transparence, of uncomplicated, uninitiated guilelessness, "nothing-withholding and free," is deceptive. She is a great, even if singular poet. She is not eccentric, not arch, not quaint; for, as Professor Kittredge justly remarks, "quaintness is incompatible with art"; she is merely Emily Dickinson and she speaks in her idiom—and she knows very well what she is about. That person, child or adult, who does not savor her, her open-eyed mysticism, her robust rever-

ence, her tart tenderness, and, perhaps above all, her adroit phrasing, her exact and illuminating language, simply is not an inhabitant of her country, and belongs perhaps to "the lesser breeds without the law."

The poems in this volume are no more "poems for youth" than poems for adults, though it is true that most of the poems here represent those moods and themes in which Miss Dickinson was most completely a *child-genius*, a *child-artist*. But granting—and defending—this point of view, I would still contend that the peculiar flavor of Emily Dickinson should be allowed to penetrate and permeate the child-world. Her poetry may inoculate all children against the inane, the namby-pamby, the mawkishly sentimental, and it will assuredly be for the few quintessence of poetry, poetry most singular, rare, and arousing.

#### HILDA CONKLING, AND OTHERS

One of the clearly defined literary "movements" of this decade is in the writing and the printing of poetry by children. A phase of that larger movement called, with capital letters, Creative Education, it is of note to us here because it has given us clearer insight into the mystery of the creative process, because it has quickened and refreshed childhood and thus holds out the promise of more closely integrated maturity, and because it has brought to our attention at least one richly endowed child-poet, Hilda Conkling.<sup>6</sup>

That Hilda is a genuine, original, and effective poet is evident at a glance. Even when the poems don't from our standpoint, quite come off, and this happens not infrequently, the very genesis and protoplasm of poetry are discoverable in what she writes. That Hilda is not only

<sup>4</sup> *Johnny Appleseed and Other Poems*. Macmillan, 1928.

<sup>5</sup> Published by Little, Brown, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Poems by Hilda Conkling quoted here are from *Poems by a Little Girl*, Stokes, 1920, and *Shoes of the Wind*, Stokes, 1922. They are used by special permission of the publishers, Frederick A. Stokes Company.

a true and in certain respects a great poet but a child, with a child's nature, a child's capacities and limitations, is not so immediately evident, though I believe the prescient reader would sense the child, perhaps the girl-child, peeping from behind the poems. But that Hilda is a poet for children, of that I am in doubt. For she represents childhood at its ideal, at its apotheosis; she is a poet's dream of a child, the incarnation of childhood as described by Wordsworth—and before him by Vaughan and before him by Plato; and, in my opinion, she is more intimately in rapport with sensitive, fine-fibered, beauty-haunted men and women than with her chronological peers. Perhaps the truth is, Hilda is a poet for other poets, including child-poets.

Hilda is both child and poet in her never-ceasing wonder at the strangeness of the world ("strange" is a word often on her lips) and in her sibylline surmises and divinations, her Adam-like giving of names, her perception of resemblances, her poetic pantheism, her metaphors and metamorphoses. She wonders also, and conjectures quite as revealingly, especially in her second volume, about the strangeness of the mind and personality, of words, and of poetry-making. (Those who guide children in "creative" activities might well ponder her "explanations" as well as her practices of poetry.) She has a fresh, free, daring, original power of seeing and saying—as if she were the first discoverer, the pristine poet; hence, while she is like all independent, intuitive poets, she derives from no one of them. It is this eager freshness, combined with her gnomic, cosmic wisdom gushing up from the depths of racial experience (if that means anything!) expressed clearly, frankly, crisply, "naturally," with a child's enthusiasms and an artist's restraint, in a free-flowing organic rhythm, which makes Hilda's poems so enchanting and irresistible.

I hesitate to quote, for I am embarrassed at the riches. Here are some of Hilda's fancies though they lose by being detached from their setting: locust blossoms are "shoes of the wind," the sunset reminds her of "a great pitcher pouring out light," the pollen of poppies is "a powder the fairies use," a black pansy in the evening is "like a firefly who has lost his lantern" or a "small gypsy in the dark," the pink peony in the tall glass is Queen Elizabeth in a ruff, another one is Cinderella, willows are dryads, the pine cone is a "brown girl from Kentucky." Occasionally her fancies carry the hint of a girlish giggle, as when the blue jay puts "the flowers at their wits' end for a little quiet" or the cowslips wade in water "up to their little green knees," or when she "tethers the west wind to a sycamore tree," or "I think the wind is a little selfish about lilies when they flower."

But these are fancies, conceits, however dainty they may be. Hilda has often the synthesizing, unifying imagination. I quote the first strophe of "Moon in October" as an illustration of this, as well as her structural rhythm;

The moon is at her crystal window  
Spinning and weaving. . . .  
The moon looks out of her window of crystal  
She has no lights excepting stars  
That hang on threads unknown  
From her sky-ceiling, her walls.  
Their twinkling is like the twittering of many  
birds  
In the early morning.  
The moon sits by her crystal window;  
She sings to herself and spins . . .  
Spins the pale blue silken thread  
That holds earth dangling  
Over deep night. . . .

Hilda has much to say of the moon and the night skies. Here is the first movement of "The Milky Way."

Down the highroads of the Milky Way  
We go riding  
On horses made of stars.

In another poem she declares that "when

moonlight falls on the water," she tries "to find words white enough for such shining."

And here is another scene at night (first movement of "Drowsy Island"):

I know where a crested island  
Bows his head to a wave that is full of stars. . . .  
Lays his cheek against the foam of that wave.  
It is where the sea is dark  
Against the edge of the world.

Hilda draws her themes from her reading, her mother's reading to her, from her studies, from her fancies, but chiefly from her own sensory experience; and her ability to appropriate whatever she needs and to regard it as her own proper material is indicative of high intelligence. See how she blends mythology, sun-worship, nature, and her own observation and mysticism:

#### SUNBEAMS

Sunbeams sing little folk-songs  
About fairies, about Neptune  
And those old gods. . . .  
Sunbeams remember the world being made:  
Grasses and small things  
Remind them.  
I have heard them speaking another language.  
As though the sun-god heard,  
But I can understand better their oriole-talk  
And their songs of delight  
After rain.

Happily, there is in Hilda no feeling of the debilitating dualism between nature and man, between the flesh and the spirit. She says to the marigold: "You belong to nature as I do"; and in dozens of poems she finds identities between herself and other natural phenomena. Here is one example:

Three words I combine  
Mix them like a wine  
For the sea to drink:  
Happy . . . merry . . . gleeful . . .  
These are three words  
That sparkle!  
The wind sings with foam.  
I, with my thoughts,

The physical and the intellectual world,

too, are one. Here is an expression of this unity:

#### ROYAL PALMS

There are thoughts in the earth  
That grow to be palm trees.  
Don't you hear the wind singing and moaning  
Through their fanning leaves?

Placed beside that affirmation, Wordsworth's attribution of sentience to flowers seems self-conscious and cerebral. Hilda is an untutored animist, in which she is more clearly the child than the poet.

There is little in these volumes of the traditional children's poetry, little which can be garnered into a compendium for youngsters. Hilda doesn't play games, she manifests no interest in the time-honored round of children's activities. Not in the least self-conscious, she is nevertheless self-absorbed. I suppose she has not yet been "socialized" in the modern manner—which may be one reason she is still a poet. I suspect another reason she will never appeal strongly to children, except to the poets among the children, is her use of the free verse rhythm, since most children, like most adults, prefer the closely-marked, accentuated tempo, the jingle of rhyme, and the patterned stanza. But for the few, the choice, select spirits among children, Hilda Conkling is probably the greatest poet of our times.

Of Nathalia Crane<sup>7</sup> not much need here be said, since, with rare exceptions, her poems are not for children. Probably, however, they do represent a certain type of the "terrible modern child," with his (or her) knowing pertness and irreverent sophistication, the Greenwich Village child, legitimate offspring of Floyd Dell and/or Dorothy Parker. It is remarkable poetry for a child to write, remarkable in content, spirit and technique; but it is merely—or largely—a novelty, a precocious stunt. I should nevertheless place the volume in the

<sup>7</sup> Nathalia Crane—*The Janitor's Boy*. Thomas Seltzer, 1924.

child's book-shelf for it might give certain youngsters a most exhilarating shock—and perhaps the truest education is a series of wisely selected shocks.

Two collections of poetry by children are *Singing Youth*<sup>8</sup> and *Younger Poets*,<sup>9</sup> the former a gathering from poets from four years of age up to eighteen, the latter from young people of secondary school age. Those volumes give at least a faint idea of the *elan vital*, the wide range, and the technical dexterity of those who "lisp in numbers"—if indeed free verse *is* "numbers." Probably a few of these poems will find a permanent place in the anthologies for children.

#### MARY BRITTON MILLER

Some pleasant jingles, a number of rather vivid sketches of animals drawn with caricaturizing humor, and an occasional poem of deeper import make up Miss Miller's volume for children.<sup>10</sup> To the latter category belong "Tiger," "Whippoorwill," and "Whose Tracks Are These?" (which has one highly pictorial line about the rabbit in the snow: "His little, lifted shivering foot"). In lighter vein are "Bull," "Hippopotamus," and "Elephant." In "Parrot" the child beseeches the parrot to *please* say "hell" or "damn"; in "An Adventure" he gets intoxicated with mischief and goes on an old-fashioned, he-boy rampage; and in "Child's Dream" he has a long, confused, exciting, horrific adventure among the wild animals. Evidently not of the Ruskin "sweet and sad" family, this chap; no Paul Dombey he.

There is robust, graphic writing in this book, far and away above the sentimental, O-be-joyful stuff so often ladled out to children. I quote the first stanza of "Tiger"

The tiger in rage  
Pads slowly to and fro,  
With fiercely lowered head  
And slow, deliberate tread  
He walks the cage.

—which, if not Blake's "Tiger," is yet impressive poetry.

And I must quote also the final poem in the volume, which, though probably not for children, shows Miss Miller's point of view:

#### BOYS AND GIRLS

Heigho,  
Swallows' wings,  
Boys and girls  
Are silly things.

Heigho,  
Books and schools  
Can't keep them  
From being fools.

But who's a fool  
And who is wise?  
Heigho,  
Peacock's eyes.

Heigho,  
A fool's the one  
Who has forgotten  
He was young.

#### ILO ORLEANS

Concocted by the Mother Goose recipe—and very obviously concocted—Mr. Orleans failed to use the pinch of salty raciness and the careless touch of wild, impromptu, pepperish nonsense that distinguishes the original. Here<sup>11</sup> is little of the characterization which paints in a few brisk lines personages as clear-cut, as rememberable, and as motley as Chaucer's pilgrims; and little of the headlong dash, the irresistible pull of the rhythm and the explosion of fire-cracker noises which make the best of Mother Goose jingles the best jingles ever sing-songed.

Here are three samples, the best I could find:

<sup>8</sup> Edited by Mabel Mountsier. Published by Harpers, 1927.

<sup>9</sup> Edited by Nellie B. Sargent. Published by Appleton, 1932.

<sup>10</sup> *Menagerie*. Macmillan, 1928. Verses are quoted by special arrangement with the Macmillan Company.

<sup>11</sup> *Father Gander*, by Ilo Orleans. Claude Kendall, 1933. Verses are quoted by special permission of the publisher.



In orchestras I see men blow  
 A trumpet or a flute;  
 But I can only blow tin horns—  
 And toot, and toot, and toot.

Julian must stay in his bed;  
 He neither runs nor jumps,  
 Julian must stay there because  
 His face is full of mumps.

I finished my cocoa  
 I drank the whole cup.  
 My lettuce and carrots—  
 I chewed them all up.  
 I ate a whole lamb chop  
 With great appetite—  
 But I will be hungry  
 For dinner tonight.

No need, perhaps, to break such harmless butterflies on the wheels of criticism. Let them flutter. But let us not confuse fluttering with flying.

#### ANNETTE WYNNE

Despite the fervid acclaim of William Stanley Braithwaite and Anna Hempstead Branch, I find almost no poetry in the two fat volumes of Annette Wynne.<sup>12</sup> This is, for the most part, goody-goody, namby-pamby, made-to-order, written-down stuff, with babified vocabulary, and prosaic, padded-out lines. Fortunately, one could filch, for a child's collection, an occasional quatrain, such for example as

The roofs all day look at the sky,  
 And greet each cloud that saunters by,  
 They watch the sky grow deeper blue,  
 And talk to stars the long night through.

or this:

The little window's open wide  
 All day to let the sun inside,  
 But when the dark comes, turn about,  
 It lets its own warm shining out.

or this, the best thing of Miss Wynne's I have discovered:

<sup>12</sup> For *Days and Days*, Stokes, 1919; and *All Through the Year*, Stokes, 1932. Verses are quoted with the permission of the publisher.

If a bird may think, its thought are not so small,  
 For it may think of skies or hills or anything at all,  
 So a child may think, thoughts big and free and wide—

It's good for birds and children, thoughts need not fit inside.

If that statement had only been demonstrated in the verse in these volumes!

#### NANCY BYRD TURNER

Miss Turner is the author of two books of verse for children.<sup>13</sup> It is *verse*, sprightly, jingly, and disarmingly unpretentious. Much of it is amusing, some of it has glints of whimsy, and an occasional rhyme rises peak-like almost into the clouds of poetry. "Porlock," for example, which begins

As we went down to Porlock  
 All in the autumn weather,  
 Birds were on the brier bush,  
 Pearls were on the heather.

and ends

Oh, I would climb to world's top,  
 And trudge the whole way down,  
 For sake of coming sudden again  
 On little Porlock town!

"Spring Wind" has a dainty charm, as has "The Little Road." "The Visitor" and "Old Man Long Ago" are vivid and fanciful; and "Flame Song" has beauty and imagination.

But it is as a jingle-poet that Miss Turner deserves—and receives—highest praise. As illustration of her adroitness as a rhymster, I quote the beginning stanza of "The Resolute Cat."

A gray cat, very willful, took a notion once to wander  
 And clawing (and pawing) climbed up into a tree.

"I'll hide here and bide here and have a nap beside here,

And I won't come down for a kingdom, indeed  
 I won't," said he.

<sup>13</sup> *Zodiac Town*, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921. *Magpie Lane*, Harcourt, Brace, 1927. The verses are from *Magpie Lane* and are used here by permission of the publishers, Harcourt, Brace.



# Drill and Creative Work in Language Expression

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MANY OF us, no doubt, react to this subject much as a third grade teacher who ventured the suggestion that the relationship of drill work to creative work ought to be about five to one—five hours of drill to one hour of creative activity. Although the discussion of time units in planning a curriculum may, and often does, yield valuable results, the point of view that it implies, when approaching a subject of this kind, has the disadvantage of confusing the rather restricted term, *proportion*, with the much broader term of which it is a part, *relationship*. The attempt to set up a definite time ratio between drill work and creative work, moreover, suggests a preconception with which most of us, I imagine, have little sympathy, namely, that there should be a hard and fixed amount of the two activities for every child in every class of every school. Our best work is always done when we try, as far as possible, to adjust the nature and the quantity of the work to the needs of the individual child.

My idea of the relationship centres about two questions: (1) How necessary is drill work to creative work? (2) What is the effect of each upon the other? In the course of this paper I shall try to furnish answers to these questions.

Before going into the subject very far, however, it would perhaps be well for me to define exactly what I understand by the two terms *drill* and *creative work*. What is drill? Many of us, I am sure, feel a certain emotional tension at the

very sound of the word, a kind of subconscious horror born from infantile memories of deadly hours in our own schooling when we repeated by rote, over and over again, rules of usage which we either knew so well that they were nauseating or understood so little that they frightened us away from the very goals we were intended to achieve by their aid. This sort of thing still goes on. I recently heard it with my own ears in a rural third-grade room. Perhaps we ourselves are not altogether guiltless of this so-called drill when we catechize our pupils with such questions as "How does a sentence begin?" "How does a sentence end?" "What do we place after a question?" Too many of our own model pupils consider that if they start a group of words with a capital letter and end it with a period, they have written a sentence. Such a routine, to my way of thinking, is really not drill at all, because it is wrong in its emphasis. It does not produce the automatic control of the essentials of language expression for which we are striving. It is more like testing than drilling. Its outcome is a body of knowledge—more or less useful—when what we really want is a set of efficient skills.

The right kind of drill, on the other hand, is an oral or written activity in which each pupil is one hundred per cent *active*. It must be organized to produce the requisite amount of carefully spaced and varied repetition; it must avail itself, as far as possible, of all the associative factors in learning; it should be carefully

and intelligently motivated; it should be adapted to the varying needs of the individual pupils; it should aim at well-defined skills of which the children, as children, have a current need.

When we turn to the creative side of language work we find the field unusually rich in fertile suggestion. I suppose most of us hold the point of view that the creative work of the child should arise naturally out of his activity program. Yet I think it might be well for us to distinguish between the general creative impulses which the pupil's activity engenders and those more special creative impulses that have their fruition in some sort of language expression. This kind of expression is all that may concern us here, although we must recognize that one cannot in practice divorce linguistic expression from other forms such as graphic. The creative work in language may be divided for the sake of convenience into three general kinds. The first kind is that from which come such things as imaginative stories, highly imaginative description, and verse. The second kind is that from which come the stories of actual experiences, letter-writing, and conversation. The third kind is that from which come reproductions of what others have said and written. No doubt this analysis is incomplete. I have mentioned it merely that we may not make the mistake of supposing that everything which does not arise out of the pure fancy of the child is therefore not creative. We must always be on our guard to discriminate carefully between originality and creativeness. Few of us have the former; nearly all of us have the latter. Creative work in language is, then, an expression, which may be oral or written, in the child's own words, of any ideas that are really his.

In considering the question of the relationship between drill and creative work, I suppose the two extreme views of

the matter might be represented on the one hand by the teacher who would say that drill work has no place at all in the first three grades, and on the other hand by the teacher who would say that any language work in those grades, if it is to be an effective preparation for future language needs, should take the form of drill. Perhaps we all have something of both of these attitudes in our own composition. Many of us, no doubt, have felt not a little disturbed when we thought ourselves bound to cut off a stimulating class discussion in order to introduce a period of drill the need of which seemed imperative. Perhaps, too, we have felt a little embarrassed when, after carefully planning a drill period, we have found some current interest on the part of the children leading us and them away from the immediate objective. Probably not a few of us have done violence to our own feelings in situations of this kind, one way or the other, and have ruthlessly interrupted a period of profitable discussion by injecting into it a period of drill, or have allowed the discussion to continue when we knew that some sort of drill work would be of greater value. For neither procedure can there be any ultimate justification. Drill work introduced at an inopportune moment is almost certain to build up a mental set against the drill itself which may effectively undermine its value. The neglect of drill work, on the other hand, or the adoption of a hit-or-miss procedure deprives the child of that mastery of the essentials of good English to which he is entitled and of which he has a current need.

It is our business as teachers to find some way of meeting this dilemma. I should like to set up three principles by which we may do it. The first is this: creative work should always precede drill work both in emphasis and in practice. It must always be borne in mind that lan-

guage is a tool subject. It must be thought of as the *means* by which ideas are expressed. The obvious inference, therefore, is that our first objective should be to build up in the pupil ideas that are interesting to him—so interesting that he will feel impelled to give expression to them. It is only when he feels a strong desire to express himself that he will become genuinely interested in the means of expression. Those of us who have taught in more advanced classes are well acquainted with the child who regards composition work as merely a task of getting words on paper, or as the utterance of anything so long as it sounds good. Only the other day a sixth-grade boy told me that the way to talk well was to use big words. He is only one rather flagrant example of a pupil who has failed to understand that language is merely the vehicle of ideas. I think we are all prone to fall into the error of praising a child for his command of vocabulary and of phrasing without making it clear to the other members of the group that the initial thought is the important thing, and that a vocabulary is not to be valued for its largeness but for its usefulness. The result is that we get pupils not infrequently who make lame attempts at imitating the words without even understanding the manner of thought that lies behind the words.

When young children first arrive in school, the chances are that they have never given language as such much serious thought at all, except in so far as it has helped them express their wants and ideas. What imitation they have indulged in has been largely unconscious and has served merely as the process by which they have collected words and phrases which minister to their needs. Hence, unconsciously they accept language as a tool. It should be our concern to make sure that this attitude toward language is not

broken down. To use too much drill in the first grade, or to use any drill which is not immediately intelligible to the child as a cofactor of his own expressional needs is to create in his mind the concept that language is something artificial, something outside of and not clearly related to himself. I consider this a real danger. At first thought, one might object that to limit drill work to the immediate and intelligible needs of the primary school child would mean an elimination of so much technical material that the child would not make the progress necessary for his future language work. More mature consideration, however, will reveal that his needs develop rapidly enough and that we shall have our hands full if we are going to take care of them as they come along and teach them thoroughly.

Many textbooks of the past have taken a preparatory point of view with regard to drill work. That is, they have analyzed those items which the pupil will most probably need in the immediate future and have proceeded to give drill upon them. This procedure has two glaring faults: first, it does not take cognizance of the child's ability really to master the items with which he is presented, so that the curriculum becomes cluttered with a plethora of details none of which can be learned in the time given; second, many of the matters taken up are so far removed from the actual needs of the children that the only effect is to put them in mind of linguistic crimes which they had never thought of committing. Over and above these two things, however, there is always the underlying danger that the pupil's idea of a language book will take on a significance which it does not deserve. You and I use handbooks, dictionaries, and manuals of various kinds as tools in our work. It seems to me rather important that any language book that we put into the hands of a child in the pri-

mary grades should have approximately the same meaning for him. In some schools this result is achieved by having the pupils make their own handbooks as they go along.

I have said that creative work should always precede drill in practice, and I mean this quite literally. I should say that any deviation from this procedure would be particularly undesirable at the primary level, since it serves as almost our only means of making clear to the young child that language is subordinate to thought. Furthermore, it has the decided advantage of providing a really sound motivation for the drill work itself. As the child is passing through the sixth, seventh, and eighth years of his age he is becoming increasingly socialized, and, in consequence, he feels more and more strongly impelled not only to express his ideas but to communicate them to his fellows. When we show him through the medium of his own creative work that a misspelled word, a garbled sentence, or the omission of a period constitute very real obstacles to such communication, we quite naturally develop in him the desire to overcome these obstacles. This does not mean that once we have aroused this desire in him we may go forward and drill him on anything that we may think he needs. On the contrary, if we are to keep the drill work on a level of actuality, we must limit ourselves quite specifically to those items in his own day-by-day work that he needs and that he has the ability to master. I can imagine that some teachers might take exception to this dictum with regard to spelling. Spelling does offer a special problem inasmuch as it is difficult for the teacher to determine, without a spelling book, or some such manual as Thorndike's *Teacher's Word Book*, just what words we may expect the child to be capable of learning at the primary level. In this instance his needs so far outrun his capabilities that perhaps we

are somewhat justified in relaxing our vigil and submitting to the routine of the regular spelling book. Yet I still think the best results will come if we face the issue, analyze each individual's spelling needs and abilities from his creative work, and then proceed to drill in the light of this information.

By such a procedure, we shall be able to build up in our pupils the proper attitude toward language, we shall find them mentally set for the drill work which will give them a facility in expression for which they should feel the need, and we shall give them what I think is the most valuable thing of all—a language conscience. One cannot build up a language conscience in the pupils by mere exhortation. When we find them forgetting their periods and capital letters, when we hear them start a sentence with the horror of horrors, "Him and me," or worse still, "Me and him," how many of us say, or at any rate are tempted to say, "You are not thinking!" Yet how illogical we are when we say this sort of thing—especially in the later grades. The use of the capital and the period should not be matters for thought at all when the process of creation is going on; they should be well ingrained habits. When we blame the pupil for not thinking about these things, we are not only directing his thought along the wrong lines, we are putting the blame on the wrong person. If the child has not been taught to regard these skills as habits he must develop, and if he has not been given the opportunity to develop them to the point of mastery, whose fault is it?

A useful term which has recently come into use to denote these skills is the word *automatism*. Such things as capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and correct usage are automatisms. That is, they are the items in the child's language learning which should be so thoroughly mastered that their correct use will be automatic, not conscious. Of course, it is true that



the best of us never do completely master them. I once heard a radio announcer—we all know what perfect command of automatisms they are supposed to have—say of an author who had just died that his works were about to be published “posthumorously.”

This brings us to the second principle, namely, that the automatisms should be mastered in order to free the child's mind for creative work, and that they can be mastered only by intensive and extensive drill work which begins early and continues through the child's entire school career. Since automatisms must function in the realm of habit, and since, as we all know, habits are most easily and lastingly formed in the early stages of life, it seems to me advisable that we should begin the inculcation of them as early as is possible and feasible in the light of what has already been said. As far as I know, the only way they can be inculcated is through drill. I think there are times when we tend to confuse creative work and drill work. That is, we sometimes insist so strongly on proper technical form during a period of creative writing or speaking that too much of the child's thought is taken up with form rather than with content. I do not mean that we should not encourage the child to exercise a reasonable amount of care in his work, but I do mean that we should not hamper him by demanding too many things of which he has not yet acquired a good command. It is for this reason that I believe drill work as such should have a definite place in the program, separate from the creative work, yet definitely related to it. If we are going to free the child's mind so that he may be able to think and express himself confidently and fluently, it is necessary that we give him as complete a mastery of the automatisms as it is possible to obtain. I know a child who is definitely handicapped in his oral work especially, not because he does not have anything to say

but because he does not feel sure of how to say it. It is even possible that some types of stammering originate in this difficulty.

When I speak of drill work, I mean organized drill, not merely the correction of errors as they crop up. It has been proved by experiment that in the elimination of errors the incidental comment is far less effective than organized drill. By means of drill, moreover, we have the added advantage of being able to isolate the error, to focalize it in the child's mind as the specific difficulty that he must get rid of, and to give him the feeling, once the drill is completed, that he has made some progress toward his goal. I know how difficult it is to carry out this procedure with primary pupils and still maintain their interest. However, I think that by following certain rules it can be done. First, in all of his creative work we should encourage the pupil to ask about all of the elements of usage and form which he has not yet mastered and which are of incidental occurrence. This spirit of inquiry will further the development of his language conscience. Second, we should avail ourselves of every opportunity for incidental drill work which presents itself, such as the correct writing of the date at the top of all school papers and the answering of routine questions with complete statements. Third, we should organize at definite intervals—not too far apart to depreciate the effects—periods of oral and written drill arising from recurring errors in the creative work of the pupils. Fourth, all drills should be short, specific, and not too difficult. And fifth, we should always carry in our minds a clear plan of the technical objectives of the year, so that we may make every situation serve toward their attainment. In many respects I think that this last rule covers the other three, for the inevitable result of confusion on this head is either an abortive attempt to teach too much or a failure to



teach anything. On the other hand, although it is probably wise for the teacher to keep her technical objectives constantly in sight, I do not think that the pupils should be aware of such a plan, lest their attitude toward language development, especially in the first and second grades, should become rather mechanical. Perhaps in this one case we ought to beware of the operation of the collective instinct. I think, however, that at the beginning of the third grade or thereabouts the child might be made progressively conscious of the plan of technical work as it unfolds, since at that level his interest in language as merely a tool should be fairly well established, and since the feeling of success that comes with improvement will have a healthy effect in energizing his language conscience.

The third and last general principle is so obvious that I shall not spend much time enlarging upon it. It is this: drill work should always be adapted to the needs of the individual pupil. To have a pupil perform an exercise which is intended to eliminate his use of the word "ain't," when the probabilities are that he has never used "ain't" in his life, is, of course, the most barefaced folly. Let him go to work on something that he really needs while his less linguistically pure brethren

wrestle with the horrid solecism. This is not to assert that we should do away altogether with class drill. There are enough automatisms to keep an entire class busy for a certain number of drill periods, but beyond that number there are bound to be some pupils who require more drill to attain mastery and some pupils who require none. It is at this point where the differentiation should take place. To be sure, such a differentiation demands a good deal of planning, but what good teaching does not?

We began by asking two questions—how necessary is drill work to creative work? and what is the effect of each upon the other? I have tried to answer these questions by setting up three general principles: first, that creative work should precede drill work in emphasis and practice; second, that those automatisms which when mastered free the pupil's mind for creative work can only be secured through intensive and extensive drill; and third, that drill work should always be adapted in so far as possible to the needs of the individual child. Perhaps these principles are rather idealistic, but I am still not too cynical to believe that it is only by shooting for the ideal that we ever get anywhere in a practical world.

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# Problems of Research: An Evaluation\*

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AS DESIGNATED by the editor, this evaluation of The Conference's Bulletin on research problems in reading is limited to a consideration of Sections I, III, V, VI and VII.

At the outset, there are at least two reasons why I should like to compliment Dr. Durrell and his committee upon the content of the Bulletin. In the first place the selection of investigations included has been well made. So far as I am competent to judge, the great majority of really important studies, as I know them, have been at least noted. There are, of course, a few individual investigations, which I judge to be of considerable value, that have not been included. Most of these, however, are of relatively recent origin and are to be found in a few different research centers. I am referring particularly to important studies in vocabulary, and others dealing with the relation between reading and language. This omission is not mentioned here as a matter of criticism. The task of locating all investigations is exceedingly difficult, and probably cannot be completed. Furthermore, the committee did not intend to include every notable investigation.

Second, I feel that Dr. Durrell's suggestions relative to problems needing investigation are particularly important. To me, these suggestions show an alert consciousness of research needed in reading. When one considers the number of people producing objective data on the

teaching of reading, there are enough important suggestions offered in the Bulletin to keep research workers busy for some time to come. Furthermore, it seems to me that many of these suggestions show considerable judgment concerning what is important.

## *Research Problems Raised in Introductory Matter*

The point of view expressed in Section I of the Bulletin is fortunate. It is certainly valuable to know the points at which our knowledge about the teaching of reading is inadequate, whether this inadequacy is caused by lack of data or the insufficiency of existing data.

It is rather startling to realize that almost 1500 different investigations in the field of reading have been reported. It is true that each piece of valid research opens up many new problems to be investigated. But there are probably other reasons why the 1500 studies have not improved the teaching of reading to a greater degree. First, it is perfectly obvious that many of the problems investigated have not been important in the sense that the data gathered were particularly helpful in the actual teaching job. It has been too easy to find relatively insignificant problems to be investigated. It is my humble opinion that any investigation in reading that does not concern itself with meaning as an ultimate element and as a final measure in reading, makes very little contribution to the improvement of teaching. Too many studies have been concerned almost exclusively with

\* Of Dr. D. D. Durrell's report, *Research Problems in Reading in the Elementary School*, the Fourth Annual Research Bulletin of The National Conference on Research in Elementary School English.

mechanics. Second, the results of too many of the 1500 studies have never reached the hands of classroom teachers in usable form. This is one reason why this Bulletin, placed in the hands of competent supervisors, should be useful in actually improving instruction. Finally, within very recent years, there has been growing in some quarters the naïve feeling that it is clever, popular, and even progressive to improve teaching by disregarding research. This is particularly the case where available data conflict with somebody's notion. This attitude, of course, is not conducive to the utilization of objective data even when they are available.

It is most certainly true that there is a wide field for investigation in intermediate grade reading. We know very little about this period of instruction, and there are numerous problems that suggest themselves, in addition to the discovery of reading abilities to be developed. For example, it is the fashion today to present in basal readers, collections of stories and informative material in the form of closely knit units, with the various selections supposedly contributing to the understanding of some central theme. It would at least be interesting to discover just what this "closed theme knitting" of stories does to the meanings that children get from the reading of a given story. In most stories there are many understandings and meanings that the reader should get. There is a possibility that a "closed unit with a theme" organization may limit these meanings entirely too much.

There is another problem in intermediate grade reading that is of considerable importance. I refer to the selection of stories and other material to be read. If, for one thing, intermediate reading is to stimulate and maintain wide interests in reading, it is important that the selections to be read be chosen with care. We need

investigations to discover what selections will best realize this purpose, and one important matter to be kept in mind is the appeal a given selection makes to the children for whom it is intended. Such research should be more or less continuous, and as I see it, the selections to be evaluated in terms of child interest must first of all possess high literary merit. The one extensive study we have of children's choices in prose has been marred by the inclusion of stories of questionable literary merit. Some of the stories which received the highest ranking by children certainly are questionable in terms of the quality of the writing. We have a long way to go before we know as much about children's choices in prose as we have been able to learn from Dr. Helen MacIntosh's study in poetry. So far as I can see, it is important to secure children's interest in reading material of superior literary merit. I see no point in creating interest in mediocre writing.

I realize that I was not asked to consider intermediate grade reading in this evaluation of the Bulletin. But in supporting Dr. Durrell's claim that we know very little about this period of instruction, I cannot resist the temptation to call attention to one additional matter. We need a great deal of research on the methods to be employed in exposing children to literature. As I see it, if there is one place where the reading program has flopped and flopped badly, it is in the field of literature. The results of surveys of the voluntary reading interests of both children and adults are rather convincing on this point. There is a possibility that in spite of years of chanting about teaching children to appreciate good literature, the present rather low level of reading interests may be due to methods of teaching that are actually harmful. I repeat that investigation into methods of teaching literature is badly needed, and I feel that such research must use as its

fundamental measuring stick the quality of the reading interests that children acquire rather than the knowledge of how good literature is made.

As Dr. Durrell states in his introduction, it is true that the tools of research in reading are immature, inexact, and too limited. It is important, too, to remember that this condition does not constitute a reason for eliminating research as a method of improving instruction. One of the most important outcomes of good research is the discovery of more valid and less limited tools for further research. One of the outstanding examples of this sort of thing is found in the discovery, by Dr. Harry Greene of the University of Iowa, of more valid tools to be used in the investigation of children's oral expression.

#### *Research problems in elementary reading*

Section III of the Bulletin deals with research in primary reading. So far as I am competent to judge, the material seems to me to be inclusive of the more important work that has been done. I must say again that Dr. Durrell's suggestions relative to possible research problems are excellent.

I have the feeling that several of the investigations and problems listed in this section are illustrative of the less important type of problem. This, however, is a matter of personal opinion. But, for example, I am not quite certain of the value of discovering whether beginning instruction in reading should be delayed until the child reaches the later primary grades. In my mind, reading instruction should begin when the child is ready for it, no sooner and not much later. This means, of course, that reading may begin when the child has experiences that he wants to read about, when he has language expression in which these experiences may be cloaked, when he is capable

of making the needed physical adjustments, including the work of the eye, and when we have suitable material for him to read. As is well known, the arrival at this readiness for reading varies greatly among children. One would think that the time to begin reading instruction is largely a matter of individual differences, and that grade location should have little if anything to do with it. One of the great handicaps in beginning reading is still the lack of high quality material. Even with all our work and talk relative to the construction of primers, I still feel that there is a great lack of commercially prepared material that children should read. There is still a lack of beginning material that is devoted exclusively to the experiences of the reader, and that sufficiently relates these experiences in the child's language.

Furthermore, there are studies reported that to my mind are premature. They were made before we were ready to have them made. The contribution of workbooks to achievement in reading cannot be evaluated until we first know what a workbook should be. The effect of activities on achievement in reading cannot be measured until we know what activities should be carried on. This situation is somewhat analogous to the work of those people who were busy several years ago making standard spelling scales, before we really knew even the beginnings of what words should be tested.

It is difficult to select a most important problem from among those listed or suggested in the section on primary reading. I am glad that Dr. Durrell raised the question as to just what activities most benefit reading. This problem needs to be investigated. There seems to be a rather deep seated faith in some centers that almost any activity, as long as it is an activity, must benefit the learning of almost anything. So far as I know, there is no occult power attached to activities



which may make any one of them productive of superior achievement in reading. One would expect those activities which develop the concepts needed in reading to be the most fruitful. One might, first of all, discover just what concepts children need in order to attach truthful meaning to the printed symbols appearing in available beginning material in reading. Perhaps then he might discover the activities which give the most promise of proving helpful. Subsequently, the value of these activities to achievement in beginning reading might be measured.

This business of giving children concepts needed in early reading by means of concrete activities or experiences is important. But, first, we should know what concepts are going to be met in reading. I realize that this is one way of putting the cart before the horse; that beginning reading matter should be based only on the concepts that the child already has. But as a matter of fact, such reading matter is really quite rare. Sometimes the application of "first aid" research is justifiable, and I feel that here is one such case.

May I say parenthetically that in this matter of getting at the effect of activities upon reading achievement, it might be interesting, too, to turn the problem around? I should like to know the effect of reading important material upon the learning that takes place through an activity.

Further investigation into the problems of vocabulary is very significant. I refer particularly to the construction of a graded-meaning vocabulary. It is fortunate that work has been initiated on this problem. Certainly it is important to know just what words children understand at a given grade level, and further to know just what particular meanings of a given word are understood at that grade level. With such data at hand,

skilled writers might be able to make reading material that is really, for example, third grade material. As matters stand now, this cannot be done with the use of any available word list. Even with all the talk of "measuring" books by the *Thorndike Word List*, such measurement is, to say the least, misleading. The *Thorndike Word List* can't tell anyone anything about what words children of a given grade level are able to understand in reading, and so far as I know, the author never claimed that it could be used for such a purpose. The hard nut to crack in developing a graded or age-meaning vocabulary is the construction of a valid test for measuring knowledge of a given meaning of a given word. Recent evidence shows that a child, skilled in verbalism, can successfully respond to many of our modern tests without really knowing the meaning involved.

There is a need for considerable investigation of the relation existing between reading and language. Recent evidence points to the possibility of achievement in reading depending much more upon achievement in language than most of us had formerly thought. When it is shown that some children comprehend a given statement in spoken form no better than they do in printed form, one can easily become suspicious of some of our suspected reading difficulties. Perhaps they may be fundamentally language troubles. Perhaps a program of instruction in language should reinforce a program in reading by getting concepts that are needed in reading, first experienced in language form. It is regrettable that there is such a lack of data on the contribution of language to reading. Not only is the problem of first importance in preparing children for reading, but there is a possibility of a continuation of this importance through the elementary school. Someone should find out about



it. This problem, together with the discovery of a graded-meaning vocabulary, represents to me the most helpful research that could be carried on at the present time in primary reading.

There is another problem of particular importance to beginning reading on which data should be gathered. An examination of primers will show that in a given story or selection there are wide gaps in content. I mean that some of the things which anyone would do in engaging in the activity described in the selection are omitted. Probably the assumption is that the beginning reader will infer as he jumps the gaps that these things have taken place, but that they are not told in the selection. Now anyone will admit that probably the most important thing for the beginner to learn in his early reading efforts is that when he reads he gets meaning. Anyone will admit also that reading materials should be constructed so that the getting of meaning is not blocked. Consequently, there is some reason to think that beginning reading material, in telling an experience familiar to the child, should follow very closely the thinking that the child would do in thinking about that experience. I should like to know what the relation is in beginning reading between effective comprehension and the closeness with which the material follows the child's thinking about the content to be read.

The tremendous importance of continued research in the whole problem of individual differences and in remedial reading is both obvious and real. Also it may be suggested that there is need for further research on illustrations. One, and only one, point involved is the matter of children's choices. Available data pertaining to this criterion are not conclusive. Additional research is now under way.

Finally, I should like to offer the suggestion that the greatest need for research in primary reading lies on the meaning and thinking side of the reading process. We need to know much more about the mind's handling of printed symbols. Surely we can afford to turn to this thinking side of the reading job in preference to continuing too much of an exclusive attack upon mechanical matters.

### *Methods of research*

Section VI of the Bulletin is concerned with suggestions for research methods in reading. To me this material is particularly valuable, and it should be called to the attention of research workers everywhere. If digested and applied it should save us from the sin of spending time on half baked research.

Dr. Durrell has done an excellent job in listing and describing the main water holes in equating groups. Even when his warnings are carefully followed, no one will claim that we can construct perfectly equal groups. Of course that problem is a matter of degree.

Dr. Durrell has done the same sort of excellent work in his discussion of controlling variables in experimental work. Lack of adherence to these variables probably has done more than any other one thing to throw much of the experimental research in reading into the professional ash can.

It is heartening to read the suggestions relative to the evaluation of outcomes in research. If the investigator will keep in mind the suggestions made, he will many times be protected from drawing conclusions before he has obtained all the data he needs.

I have only two suggestions to make. The first is that in all research pertaining to the selection of methods, materials, and the like, the stick used for measuring

# Editorial

## Thanksgiving

THE ELEMENTARY school's traditional Thanksgiving celebration is familiar to every one in the United States. There are the Puritan forefathers, the New England settlement background, and the Indians. The president's proclamation is read, roast turkey and cranberry sauce are extolled as the standard American Thanksgiving dinner, and the dramatization of the first colonial Thanksgiving day takes place with John Alden and Priscilla Mullins in the principal roles.

This is all beautiful in sentiment, and gives one conception of an American Thanksgiving. But in a country as diversified in historic background, in popular tastes, and native customs, and racial inheritances as the United States, these traditional exercises should be broadened in concept. "From time immemorial," says Miss Mildred Dawson in her article on page 245, "the nations of the earth have celebrated the harvest season by festivities and ritual designed to express gratitude to the beneficent higher powers that have fostered the growth and maturing of the grains and fruits."

Back of the Thanksgiving day celebration should be the aim to strengthen in every child in the American elementary schools, a sense of gratitude for the blessings of life, and a desire to give thanks for those things that have been enjoyed in the abundance of a kind Providence. Nor should we fail to emphasize the many acts of generosity and social benefits that one enjoys by virtue of his place in the family, the neighborhood, and the nation.

Thanksgiving represents one of the

most ancient and universal of all holidays—the harvest. It is perhaps the only universally observed religious festival; the formal giving of thanks transcends church and national boundaries, and extends back to the very beginnings of human history. Evidently, then, the background and sources that may be drawn upon in school celebrations reach to the remotest past and to the remotest peoples. The impulse is eternal and universal.

But what the harvest means, and what the feast signifies to the Pueblo Indian child in Arizona will not mean harvest and will not signify feast to the child in the Ozarks, or in the Santa Clara valley of California. Not bronze turkey gobblers, but squash and corn in the one instance, cotton, and sweet potatoes, and prunes and almonds in the others, would be the appropriate symbols of the harvest.

What is most important is that the symbolism and the background elements in the Thanksgiving day celebration be made sufficiently native to the inheritances and the traditions of any child's life to stir to the very depths of ancestral, racial, and national past a sincere and lively human gratitude.

There is an important pedagogical aspect, also, to the effectiveness of the celebration, for as Daniel Defoe long ago pointed out, human gratitude is the most difficult of all virtues to cultivate.

Thanksgiving day, then, may offer the rarest of all opportunities to the elementary school teacher of English. The unit outlined by Miss Dawson on page 245 ("We Thank Thee, Lord") will prove to be highly suggestive and informing.

# Reviews and Abstracts

**The World Book Encyclopedia.** Edited by M. V. O'Shea; revision editor for the 1933 and 1936 editions S. Edgar Farquhar. 18 volumes. 1936.

Eighteen volumes of encyclopedia proper, with an extra volume containing a guide to reading and a guide to study, the former being a classification of knowledge, with page references to the encyclopedia, and the latter offering several illustrative units of instruction, with similar references. There is also, for teachers, a loose-leaf volume of unit teaching materials, with illustrations and references to the encyclopedia. The 1936 edition is bound in red, with a specially durable binding, fine paper, and clear type, making a handsome set fit to stand hard wear.

The general arrangement is alphabetical, with the whole of each letter in one volume, which is now the accepted form for junior encyclopedias. Following the major articles is an outline of study purposes, with a list of questions, and references to related topics. These references, which occur constantly through the work, take the place of the index included in some other sets. The index, with brief explanations as well as page references, forms a handy dictionary, and some students still regret its exclusion from the *World Book*.

The style is brief and lucid, articles are written by recognized authorities or submitted to them for approval, and many of the major articles are signed. There are many extra aids for the young student, as, for instance, a list of birthdays and events for each month, and a page of quotations. There are the words of some famous songs, followed occasionally by the tune. The article on the Apostles is followed by biographies of each of the twelve. While there are no retold stories, as in some junior encyclopedias, the plots of world-famous stories are outlined, with

critical appraisal of the work. Biographies of living persons are included.

Outstanding in their excellence are the illustrations. Clear colored maps are given for the important countries, and for each state of the Union, with finding lists of towns and other geographical features. There are full-page colored reproductions of famous pictures, scenes from other lands, and specimens of birds, insects, etc.; and in number and suitability the halftone illustrations can scarcely be sufficiently commended. Added to these are many graphs and diagrams excellently reproduced.

New editions have been issued at intervals of several years, with supplementary volumes in between issues, to keep the information up-to-date. In order to keep the size of the set within reasonable bounds this has meant that some of the older information has been condensed or omitted. In the body of the work this is not so apparent, however, as there is more room for rearrangement of material.

The bibliography at the end of volume eighteen is rather lost, and one wonders why it was not included in the extra volume. It is brief, and arranged by subject. It was apparently drastically revised for the 1933 edition but fewer changes were made for 1936. Where a new entry had been made it took the place, literally, of an entry for an older book, and is now not in its correct alphabetical position.

On the whole the revisions and additions for a new edition of the entire work have been well carried out, and the set makes an excellent work of reference for use through elementary and high schools, and is, moreover, eminently satisfactory for casual reference demands of adults.

Joyce M. Jopling  
Schools Department  
Detroit Public Library

# Among the Publishers

## Social Science

*Little American Books.* By Bertha M. Rhodes. Illus. by Eleanore M. Hubbard. Albert Whitman, 1936. 50¢ each. From 4 to 8 years.

The series includes: Eagle Ranch (cowboys); Just Tom (policemen); Flag to the Front (soldiers); Signals (railroad travel); Spotted Deer's Party (Indians); Engine Company No. 25 (firemen). These books were written, it is stated, to gratify the child's natural interest in cowboys, policemen, and Indians, while counteracting the false impressions of such characters gained from the wrong type of stories or from movies. The books are of good literary quality.

*Children of the White House.* By Frances Cavanah. Illus. by Genevieve Foster. Rand McNally, 1936. 50¢. 7-12.

The incidents related are trivial.

*Traffic.* By Marion S. Lowndes and Frances N. Chrystie. Photographs by John J. Floherty. Doubleday, Doran, 1936. \$1.00.

A day in the lives of Ned, the filling station attendant, and his cat, Ethyl. Excellent supplementary material for social science.

*Life and Work in England.* A Sketch of Our Social and Economic History. By Mrs. H. A. L. Fisher. Edward Arnold, 1934.

Excellent for reference in economics, social science, and history in the upper grades.

## Other Times

*In the Stone Age.* A Boy's Story of Early Paleolithic Times. By Gregory Trent. Illus. by Carle M. Boog. Harcourt, Brace, 1936. \$2.00.

An absorbing story. From the dedication, "For Ernest A. Hooton, my Anthropology Professor at Harvard" one assumes the fiction is based on scholarship.

*Jade Brings Luck.* By Marion Gilbert. Illus. by Clara Hart Van Lennep. Longmans, Green, 1936. \$1.50. 10-12.

The day-by-day life of the lake-dwellers told simply and fascinatingly.

## Other Places

*Over the Castle Walls.* By Caroline Mabry. Illus. by Eleanor Mussey Young. Albert Whitman, 1935. \$1.00.

Stories of English castles.

*Dick and the Spice Cupboard.* By Lucille Saunders McDonald. Illus. by Helen Hawkes Battey. Crowell, 1936. \$1.75.

The outworn device of a dream. Some useful information is presented, however.

*Children of Lapland.* By Thora Thorsmark. Rand McNally, 10¢.

Informing text and excellent photographs.

*Pablo's Pipe.* By Frances Eliot. Illus. by the author. Dutton, 1936. \$1.50. 6-10.

Rural Mexico. When the wind blows away most of the family's belongings, little Pablo sets things to rights with his music.

*Children of Mexico.* By Stella Burke May. Rand McNally, 1936. 10¢.

Useful supplementary material for geography. Excellent photographs.

*Green and Gold.* The Story of the Banana. By Berta and Elmer Hader. Macmillan, 1936. \$1.00.

Well told, and enhanced by lovely pictures.

*Children of Sunny Syria.* By Myrta Hazlett Dodds. Illus. by Margaret Ayer. Crowell, 1936. \$1.50.

Author and artist have both lived in the East, and understand the children of whom they write. They describe the every-day life of a middle-class Syrian family. Good supplementary material.

*Sondo, A Liberian Boy.* By Alfred Ward Joseph. Illus. by Bernice Magnie. Whitman, 1936. \$1.00.

Strikingly gay in color. Children will find the simple story absorbing.

*Seeing America.* Photographs and descriptions of 102 leading sights of North America. By James Gilchrist Lawson. Rand McNally, 1936. 10¢.

## Biography

*The Poet of Cragie House.* The Story of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. By Hildegard Hawthorne. Illus. by W. M. Berger. Appleton-Century, 1936. \$2.50.

*Lis Sails the Atlantic.* By Lis Anderson. Introduction by Eleanor Graham. Translated by Klares and Herbert Lewes. Dutton, 1936. \$2.00.

The true adventures of a 12-year-old Danish girl who sails, with her family, from Copenhagen to Rio, Cape Town, St. Helena, Barbados, New



York, and finally home. Children will delight in sharing Lis's experiences, and adults will find the naïve, matter-of-fact account charming. Recommended.

*Noah Webster, Pioneer of Learning.* By Edwin C. Shoemaker. Columbia University Press, 1936. \$4.00.

Scholarly, but far from dull.

#### Fiction

*My Boys.* A Holiday Book for Big and Little. By Gustav af Geijerstom. Trans. from the Swedish by Alfild Huebsch. Illus. by Karl Larsson. Viking, 1933. \$2.00.

*Swords of Steel.* The Story of a Gettysburg Boy. By Elsie Singmaster. Illus. by David Hendrickson. Houghton Mifflin, 1933. \$2.00.

*Young Cowboy.* By Will James. Illus. by the author. Scribners, 1935. \$1.50.

Arranged from Big Enough and Sun Up.

*Marsh Island Mystery.* By Maristan Chapman. Illus. by James C. McKell. Appleton-Century, 1936. \$2.00.

*A Boy of the First Empire.* By Elbridge S. Brooks. Edited to fit the abilities and interests of young readers by Edward L. Thorndike. Illus. by H. A. Ogden. Appleton-Century, 1936. 88¢.

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island.* Adapted by T. E. Dunshee and Minna Ludeke. Illus. by C. E. B. Bernard. D. C. Heath, 1936. 68¢.

*Robinson Crusoe.* By Daniel Defoe. Edited to fit the interests and abilities of young readers by E. L. Thorndike. Illus. by Henry C. Pitz. Appleton-Century, 1936. 88¢.

#### Dictionaries

*The Winston Simplified Dictionary* for Schools. Ed. by Thomas Kite Brown, Jr. and William Dodge Lewis. Winston, 1936.

Clear type, simple definitions, 1700 pictorial illustrations, and handsome color plates, especially of animals.

*Concise Biographical Dictionary.* By Harriet Lloyd Fitzhugh and Percy K. Fitzhugh. Grosset and Dunlap, 1935. \$1.00.

#### Miscellaneous

*Reading Menus for Young People.* Chats About Much Loved Books, Old and New. By May Lamberton Becker. Scholastic Corporation, 1935. Upper grades.

Brief, intensely stimulating comments on books Mrs. Becker herself likes. Mrs. Becker has the knack of creating an eagerness to read.

*Manners Can Be Fun.* By Munro Leaf. Illus. by the author. Stokes, 1936. \$1.25.

*Willingly to School.* Photographs by Wendell MacRae. Material and commentary by the staff of the Fox Meadow School. Produced under the direction of Clare T. Zye. Foreword by William Heard Kilpatrick. Scott, Foresman, 1934.

*French Words and Pictures.* By Nina Granada. Viking, 1936. \$1.00.

"This is not a textbook. It is a sort of game to help beginners learn French words."

*Dr. Dolittle's Birthday Book.* By Hugh Lofting. Illus. by the author. Stokes, 1935. \$1.75.

The child who gets a copy for Christmas will have great fun.

*Romeo and Juliet.* By William Shakespeare. A Motion Picture Edition. Illus. with photographs. Random House, 1936. \$2.00.

Contains the text of the play, the screen version, comments by Irving G. Thalberg, Wm. Strunk, Jr., and by the directors, actors, and designers.

*Carroll's Alice.* By Harry Morgan Ayers. Columbia University Press, 1936. \$2.00.

*The Legend of Saint Columba.* By Padraic Colum. Illus. by E. MacKinstry. Macmillan, 1935. \$2.25.

ANNUAL MEETING OF  
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH  
THE STATLER HOTEL, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS  
NOVEMBER 26-28, 1936

*General Theme: American Youth and English*

PARTIAL PROGRAM

**Thursday, November 26**

*8:00 P.M.—Opening Session*

Addresses of Welcome: PATRICK T. CAMPBELL, Superintendent of Schools, Boston; JAMES B. CONANT, President, Harvard University.  
American Youth and Their Problems—W. S. LEWIS, President, LaFayette College.  
American Youth and Their Language—WALTER BARNES, New York University.  
President's Address: American Youth and English—DORA V. SMITH, University of Minnesota.

**Friday, November 27**

*9:30 A.M.—General Session*

New Occasions Teach New Duties—JAMES F. HOSIC, Teachers College, Columbia University.  
The Problem of Classroom Procedure in an Extensive Reading Program—ESSIE CHAMBERLAIN, Oak Park High School, Oak Park, Ill.  
The Program of the Public Library for American Youth—CLARENCE SHERMAN, Librarian, Public Library, Providence, R.I.  
The Use of Community Resources in the Teaching of English—HELEN HANLON, Detroit, Mich.

*Noon Luncheon—Elementary Section*

General Topic: Recreational Reading in the Elementary School.  
The Last Five Years in Children's Books—BERTHA MAHONEY MILLER, Editor, *The Horn Book*.  
Publishing Children's Books—DORIS PATTEE, Macmillan Company.  
Enjoying Books with Children—HELEN SOUTHGATE WILLIAMS, Detroit.  
Writing Books for Young People—CAROLINE DALE SNEDEKER.

*2:30 P.M.—Problems of Moment in Teacher Training*

The Place of Speech in the Training of Teachers of English—DOROTHY MULGRAVE, New York University.

What Can Be Done to Improve the Teaching of English in Our Schools?—REV. RICHARD J. QUINLAN, Diocesan Supervisor of Schools, Boston.  
Motivated English—RAY CARTER, Supervisor of English, Albany, N.Y.

*6:00 P.M.—Annual Banquet*

Toastmaster: RALPH P. BOAS, Wheaton College, Norton, Mass.  
The Challenge of the Theatre and Photoplay in the Molding of American Youth—PHILLIPS E. OSGOOD, Rector, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Boston.  
The Experience of Poetry—BONARO WILKINSON OVERSTREET, New York City.  
My Poems as a Part of My Life—ROBERT P. TRISTRAM COFFIN, Bowdoin College.

**Saturday, November 28**

*9:30 A.M.—Elementary Section*

General Theme: Nurturing Language Expression.  
Discussion by RUTH STREITZ, University of Cincinnati; HELEN SOUTHGATE WILLIAMS, Detroit, Mich; HAZEL WELCH, Walden School, New York; DONALD DURRELL, Boston University.

*9:30 A.M.—Junior High School Section*

General Topic: Caring for the Gifted Pupil.  
Caring for the Student of Special Interest and Ability—HERBERT W. SMITH, Fieldston School, New York City.  
Program for Gifted Pupils in New York City—HELEN LOUISE COHEN, New York City.

*1:00 P.M.—Annual Luncheon*

How Books Happen—RACHEL FIELD.  
Choral Speaking in the Educational Scheme—CECILE DE BANKE, Wellesley College.  
Demonstration Program—Verse-speaking Choir of Wellesley College, directed by Miss DE BANKE.

## PROBLEMS OF RESEARCH

(Continued from page 273)

value must be quite valid for the particular purpose for which it is used. Too many times false conclusions have been drawn when the measuring tools were not valid.

The second suggestion is that in all research in reading, the value of a given method, procedure, and almost anything else, must be measured in terms of the meaning side of reading. Furthermore, the measurements used must measure real meaning rather than the acquisition of verbalism.

*Conclusion*

In closing I should like once more to express my compliments to Dr. Durrell

and his committee for preparing such an excellent Bulletin. Frankly, I wish I could say that I had had a hand in helping to make it. It seems to me that the Bulletin has covered the main research findings, and that the critical treatments presented by Dr. Durrell are sound. Where principles have been stated, they appear to be logical. One of the outstanding features of the Bulletin is the character and number of problems raised for further investigation. Personally, I feel that the Bulletin should be of considerable value to research workers. It should also be quite useful to those supervisors who have had some training in research.

## STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933

OF THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW, published monthly from October through May ..... at Detroit, Michigan (and Menasha, Wis.) for October 1, 1936.

STATE OF Michigan ..... }  
COUNTY OF Wayne ..... } ss.

Before me, a Notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared J. L. Certain, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of the ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, C. C. Certain, Detroit, Mich.

Editor, C. C. Certain, Detroit, Mich.

Managing Editor

Business Managers, J. L. Certain, Detroit, Mich.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.)

C. C. Certain, Detroit, Mich.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) There are none.

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5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the twelve months preceding the date shown above is.....

(This information is required from daily publications only.)

Signature of J. L. CERTAIN (business manager)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of October 1936.

Edward A. Fach

(My Commission expires July 8, 1938)

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